

2013-14 Supreme Court Updates

The Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training provides the following case summaries for information purposes only. As always, please consult your agency's legal counsel for the applicability of these cases to specific situations. A longer summary of each of these cases may be found on the DOCUT website at <http://docit.ky.gov/lega>. There are also additional summaries of cases not included in this update located on the website. Full text of all U.S. Supreme Court cases may be found at <http://www.supremecourt.gov/>. Please note, the latest cases in this summary have not yet been assigned official citations.

Stanton v. Sims, 134 S.Ct. 3 (2013), Decided November 4, 2013

HOLDING: The Court held that when the law on a particular situation is not legally settled, with previous decisions in similar situations resolved in a consistent manner by the courts, an officer who takes action in the face of legal uncertainty should not be penalized. The Court ruled the officers were entitled to qualified immunity.

Kansas v. Cheever, 134 S.Ct. 596 (2013), Decided December 11, 2013

HOLDING: The Court held that a trial court may order a psychiatric examination on its own, when mental state is argued as a defense by the subject under trial. The case was reversed and remanded back to Kansas for further proceedings.

Burrage v. U.S., 134 S.Ct. 881 (2014), Decided January 27, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that direct proof is required to invoke a federal sentencing enhancement based upon the death of an individual due to an overdose allegedly sold from the subject under trial. Because so many drug-related deaths involve a combination of more than one drug, purchased, possibly, from more than one trafficker, such proof may be difficult in some circumstances, however. The Court reversed the sentence, but not the conviction, against the defendant.

Fernandez v. California, 134 S.Ct. 1126 (2014), Decided February 25, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that consent given by a party left behind when one resident is removed from a location as a result of lawful arrest not made for the purpose of getting consent is valid. In such circumstances, to not allow that person to give a consent would be disrespectful to the independence of that individual. The Court upheld the conviction.

Kaley v. U.S., 134 U.S. 1090 (2014), Decided February 25, 2014

HOLDING: The Court upheld the freezing of assets that are the proceeds of a crime, when probable cause has been demonstrated by the grand jury in an indictment.

U.S. v. Apel, 134 S.Ct. 1144 (2014), Decided February 26, 2014

HOLDING: Since military installations have public roads within their boundaries, it is necessary to determine whether the military has exclusive control of the section of an otherwise public roadway where a civilian is protesting in order to order them to leave. The Court returned the case to the trial court to determine if the military had exclusive possession of the area in question.

Rosemond v. U.S., 134 S.Ct. 1240 (2014), Decided March 5, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that to convict a co-defendant for the use or presence of a firearm during a drug deal, where the weapon was in the actual possession of another party, it is necessary that the defendant have had foreknowledge of the presence of the firearm. Since the jury instructions did not require the jury to make that decision, the case was remanded back to the trial court for further proceedings consistent with the decision.

U.S. v. Castleman, 134 S.Ct. 1405 (2014), Decided March 26, 2014

HOLDING: The Court noted that under common law, any amount of force was considered to be force, that it was appropriate to define force in a domestic violence situation to require only the slightest degree of force, including shoving, slapping and hitting. The degree of force to constitute a “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence” would be that required to support a “common-law battery conviction.” The case was remanded back to the trial court for further proceedings.

Navarrette v. California, 134 S.Ct. 1683 (2014), Decided April 22, 2014

HOLDING: The Court agreed that a detailed and specific 911 tip, even though arguably anonymous, is sufficient to support a traffic stop, even when the officer does not personally witness any violations. (The Court also noted that in modern 911 systems, it is difficult to achieve total anonymity anyway.) The Court upheld the guilty pleas in the case.

Tolan v. Cotton, 134 S.Ct. 1861 (2014), Decided May 5, 2014

HOLDING: The Court ruled that in a civil use of force case the Court must analyze the evidence presented in a manner most favorable to the plaintiff making the allegations, especially when that evidence contradicts that put forward by the defendants. The Court reversed the summary judgment that had been granted to the officers in the case, and remanded the case back to the trial court.

Martinez v. Illinois, 135 S.Ct. 2070 (2014), Decided May 27, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that the point at which a jury trial begins, for purposes of triggering double jeopardy, is when the jurors are empaneled and sworn. The Court agreed that in this case, jeopardy had attached and reversed the decision of the state courts, which had ruled that it had not.

Plumhoff v. Rickard, 134 S.Ct. 1012 (2014), Decided May 27, 2014

HOLDING: The Court agreed that using intentional deadly force to end a dangerous vehicle pursuit, is Constitutional. Further, the Court noted that an allegation that too many shots were fired at the fleeing subjects was not valid, as officers were expected to “not stop shooting until the threat has ended,” even when that puts others at risk as well. In this case, as the lower court had denied qualified immunity to the involved officers, the court reversed that decision and remanded it back.

Abramski v. U.S., (2014), Decided June 16, 2014

HOLDING: The Court ruled that a firearm must be purchased from a dealer by the actual buyer, not someone acting as a “straw buyer” for the person actually providing the money for the weapon. (The Court noted that the decision did not necessarily include a prohibition on purchasing a weapon as a gift, as that was not the facts before it.) The Court upheld the conviction for misrepresentation.

Lane v. Franks, --- U.S. --- (2014), Decided June 19, 2014

HOLDING: The Court agreed it made no sense to allow the punishment of a government employee, by termination, for that employee’s appearance and testimony under subpoena concerning a criminal case in which that employee had valid information. The Court noted that the employee’s testimony was not false or incorrect and concerned an important matter of public interest. The Court reversed the dismissal in favor of the government entity (a state community college) which fired Lane.

Loughrin v. U.S., --- U.S. --- (2014), Decided June 23, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that an attempt to pass a bad check, drawn on a federally insured bank, through a retailer, was federal bank fraud, because it was to be expected that ultimately, the check would be presented to a bank. The Court affirmed Loughrin’s conviction.

Riley v. California / U.S. v. Wurie, --- U.S. --- (2014), Decided June 25, 2014

HOLDING: The Court held that it was a violation of the Fourth Amendment to allow for cell phones to be routinely searched, incident to an arrest, although it allowed that in some situations, another exception, such as exigent circumstances, might permit it. The Court reversed Riley’s conviction and affirmed the dismissal of Wurie’s conviction.

McCullen v. Coakley, --- U.S. --- (2014), Decided June 26, 2014

HOLDING: The Court dismissed the state law at issue in the case, finding that a limitation on sharing views with others on public fora (the sidewalk) was too broad of a limitation on First Amendment. The Court reversed the decision upholding the statute that created the fixed zone.